



San Diego City Attorney **CASEY GWINN**

MEDIA ADVISORY

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CITY TAKES ON GUERILLA VANDALS DEFACING LOCAL PROPERTY

City Attorney Proposes Amendments to Ordinance to Strengthen Vandalism Law

You can see them on fences, pedestrian walkways, utility boxes, abandoned buildings, and many other locations around the city. They are posters and stickers unlawfully placed on both public and private property by so-called "guerilla artists." These vandals are sophisticated at avoiding detection, often driving down from Los Angeles in rental cars to place this "art" in San Diego. In the past year, the City has received numerous complaints from community members regarding the increase in this vandalism. Now, the City is fighting back.

On Wednesday, May 31, 2000, at 9 a.m. at the City of San Diego's Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, City Attorney Casey Gwinn, with the support of San Diego Police Chief David Bejarano, will introduce proposed amendments to San Diego's graffiti ordinance, which will strengthen the City's enforcement efforts against these vandals. The present definition of graffiti under the San Diego Municipal Code does not include posters and stickers. Amending the Code to include this recent form of vandalism will give law enforcement a new tool in the combat against blight.

Under current law, prosecutors must prove that property damage occurred when a vandal places a poster or sticker on a site. This requirement will be eliminated by the amendments to the Municipal Code proposed by the City Attorney. Amending the Code will also give the City's Graffiti Control Program the authority to remove these posters from the locations targeted by the vandals, whose posters and stickers contain depictions of faces and other graphic images.

The City Attorney's Office prosecutes graffiti vandals by filing misdemeanor criminal actions against them. These misdemeanor actions carry maximum sentences of a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail.

"These guerilla vandals must understand that the medium they are choosing has consequences for property owners, business owners, and San Diego citizens who have to deal with removal of the posters and stickers," City Attorney Casey Gwinn explained. "This proposed amendment will give us greater enforcement ability."

The City's Public Services and Neighborhood Services Committee will meet at 9 a.m. in the Council Committee room on the 12th floor of 202 C Street.

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